



# CHINESE CLAYART NEWSLETTER

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## CHINESE CLAYART

" **Chinese Clayart**" is a newsletter emailed monthly to professional ceramic artists who want to know about ceramic art in China and things related. This newsletter will be a bridge between China and Western countries for the ceramic arts. Comments and suggestions are very welcome. (Copyright 2000, The Chinese Ceramic Art Council, USA. All rights reserved)

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## FEATURE ARTICLES

Tea and Teapots, Yixing, and Europe - Carolyn Broadwell

Although the history of ceramics is thousands of years old, the teapot's first documented appearance in China was only a few hundred years ago. Its arrival in Europe occurred with shipments of tea during the sixteenth century, and this arrival became an integral part of the development of the stoneware and porcelain industries of several countries, particularly Holland, Germany, and England. In order to have a more complete picture, it is necessary to learn a little about tea itself.

Tea was discovered approximately forty-five centuries ago, and according to all historical evidence, it was in China. There are two popular myths or legends explaining the origin of tea. The first credits the divine Chinese ruler, Shen Neng, in 2737 BC, with its discovery. One day he was drunk

from drinking 72 different herbal concoctions, and was heating some water when a camellia bough accidentally fell into it; he was both relieved of his drunkenness and entranced with the taste and aroma. From this myth the use of tea as a medicinal drink evolved. The second myth is somewhat more farfetched; when Bodhidharma was meditating for seven years without sleep in order to prove his faith, he found it difficult to stay awake, so he cut off his eyelids and threw them on the ground. They grew into tea bushes!

The tea shrub is *Camellia sinensis*. In the natural state it grows as high as forty to sixty feet, but generally on tea plantations it is pruned and picked from bushes about three feet tall. For lesser teas, as many as the youngest or last four or five leaves on each branch may be picked. For the finest teas, just the terminal bud and next two leaves are used, but for ancient Chinese emperors, only the top bud was collected.

Tea requires a wet and temperate climate, and the most productive tea growing countries are China, Taiwan, Japan, India, and Sri Lanka. Tea is also grown in over twenty other countries; some of the major producers are Iran, Georgia, Cameroon, Kenya, Brazil, Argentina, and Indonesia.

Many teas are named in the same manner as fine wines; that is, after the area where they are produced. Familiar examples of this are Darjeeling, Assam, Ceylon, and Kenya, all of which are black teas. Chinese teas, more frequently green or oolong teas, are often given descriptive names, such as Water Fairy, Dragon's Well, Bright Virtue, or Iron Goddess of Mercy. Green teas are unfermented, black teas are fermented, and oolong teas are a combination of green and black leaves.

The Chinese character for tea is usually pronounced ch'a, but in the south east of China, ch'a in some dialects is pronounced as t'e. Depending on the route tea took to arrive in other countries, it is everywhere called by a variation of this word. Tea first traveled from the east during the eighth century, in Persian caravans, via Siam, South China, Assam, and Burma. By 850 AD the Arabs were sipping ch'a and eventually those countries on the overland route (i.e. Russia, Central Asia and India) also used a variation of this pronunciation. Most tea arrived in Europe via ships from ports in the south east, so the most common word used in western languages is a variation of t'e. These two variations are said to be the most universal word in all languages.

Tea was introduced to Europe in 1610 by the Dutch East India Company, and tea drinking is still very popular in Holland. Charles II learned to appreciate tea while in exile in The Hague, and when he was restored to the English throne, he introduced this exotic drink to the English court. Tea has been a significant factor in western history, and has influenced much of East/West relations. While it is fascinating to explore the far reaching influence of such a simple pleasure as a cup of tea, our concern here is primarily with the utensil designed to make it, the teapot.  
(To be continued).

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## **PROFILES**

### The Terra-cotta Warriors Museum

The Museum is located 35 km east of Xi'an and 1.5 km from the actual burial mound of the Emperor Qin's (259-210 B.C.) mausoleum. About 10,000 life-size terra-cotta warriors, horses and many other metal weapons and objects were excavated from three pits. The warriors are either standing or kneeling, from ordinary soldiers to the general, and each of them has different facial features. The pits were discovered by a local farmer who was digging a well in March 1974. The site is regarded as the "The Eighth Wonder of the World."

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### **Harvard Symposium - China Trade Porcelain**

The Ceramics Program of the Office for the Arts at Harvard presents the third in a series of annual symposia focused on major cultural traditions in the ceramic arts. This year's symposium features China Trade Porcelain and the world's largest collection of Asian Export Art at the Peabody Essex Museum of Salem, Massachusetts. Salem was a major seaport participating in this fascinating and complex story of global trade and influence. Scholars and artists will give slide lectures, collection tours, and master classes on the technology, history, and contemporary legacy of this cross-cultural exchange.

July 11 - 13, 2001, Wednesday - Friday, 9 am - 5 pm

Tuition: \$350;

Application fee: \$35;

Professional Development Points\* fee:\$20

Funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts

#### Seminar - China Trade Porcelain

This intensive three-week studio-seminar will combine the study of China Trade ceramics history and technology with creative studio work. For seminar participants who are art educators there will be projects for incorporating the course content into interdisciplinary curriculum development lesson plans. During the first week the participants will attend the Symposium's slide lectures, master classes, and collection tours. At other sessions they will work closely with the visiting artists and seminar instructor on the development of their skills as artists and as educators. Seminar participants will have access to the studio facilities 7 days and evenings per week from July 9th to September 2nd.

July 9 - 27, 2001, Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm

July 11 - 13, 2001, Wed. - Friday, 9 am - 5 pm

Instructor: Paul Briggs

Visiting Artists: Chen Guang-Hui and Kang Qing

Tuition: \$650; Application fee: \$35

3 graduate-level credits fee: \$210 \*

\*Graduate-level credits and Professional Development Points from the Cooperative Institutions Program with Massachusetts College of Art.

#### Presenters

William Sargent, Peabody Essex Museum Curator of Asian Export Art, has written and lectured extensively on all aspects of Asian trade decorative arts. During the symposium he will give slide presentations and conduct collection tours.

Chen Guang-Hui, Instructor, College of Fine Arts, Shanghai University, will give presentations on the traditional and contemporary practices and the cultural perspectives of porcelain potters, sculptors, and painters in China.

Kang Qing will demonstrate the traditional porcelain sculpture and painting techniques that she mastered and taught in Jingdezhen, the center of Chinese porcelain production for over 1000 years.

Barbara Broughel, New York artist, will discuss and exhibit elements of her multi-media sculptural installation which focuses on the role of opium in the China Trade.

Ho Sin-Ying, Hong Kong artist, will exhibit and discuss her vessels that juxtapose elements from traditional and contemporary aesthetic influences from both the East and the West.

Paul Briggs will bring his skills as an artist and art educator to the three-week seminar in China Trade ceramics. He is Head of Visual Arts at the Storm King School in Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York.

The Ceramics Program of the Office for the Arts at Harvard provides a diverse enrollment of undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate students and professionals with opportunities to take classes, work in a spacious, well-equipped studio, and contribute to a dynamic educational environment. Visiting artist workshops and seminars in architectural ceramics, ceramics history, art

education, and glaze chemistry offer challenging professional development courses.

Application Forms:

[by e-mail: selvage@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:selvage@fas.harvard.edu)

on website: [www.fas.harvard.edu/~ofa/programs/ceramics](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~ofa/programs/ceramics)

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## **LETTER from the editor**

LETTER from the editor, Guangzhen Po Zhou

Twenty issues of our monthly newsletter have been published, and in 2001 we have gotten over 10,000 visitors to our website every month. I very much appreciate the hard work of the newsletter's English editor Deborah Bouchette and our web designer Tyler Hannigan. Unfortunately, due to the busy schedule of my work and life, I have to change the newsletter to bi-monthly.

We have several Chinese ceramic experts on our trip to China this year, and I am going to use some of their articles in the newsletters. Also, if you have anything related to the Chinese ceramic art or culture, please send it to us, it may get published in our newsletter. Thank you for your understanding and support!

- Guangzhen "Po" Zhou

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## **RELATED LINKS**

### The Chinese Cultural Related Web Sites

These web site are provide by Dr. Daphne Rosenzweig, professor of Ringling School of Art and Design, Florida

Asian Art Mall: Yixing Teapots,

This is a commercial site, with very few non-tourist-art items, but it does show what Yixing teapots are available on the market, over the net.

A commercial site, from which the Jingdezhen article was excerpted

Asia Society Visible Traces Website,

Has many other sites listed,

useful for scholars, teachers, etc. There is a Chinese characters site listed, haven't plugged it in yet, and several exhibitions with contemporary Chinese art.

Antique Chinese Porcelain Information - Ming, Qing, Export, Marks,

The Gotheborg.com site, very large, full of ceramics information, with some commercial links but other very useful material including marks on Chinese ceramics.

There is also a large monthly-Asian-works-of-art auction site, [www.chait.com](http://www.chait.com). And a private dealer with good Chinese and Japanese works for sale, at this website, [www.lchibanAntiques.com](http://www.lchibanAntiques.com).

And finally: "[www.chinese-art.com](http://www.chinese-art.com)", which has an e-bulletin with archeological finds, exhibitions and museum news, and "[www.surfchina.com](http://www.surfchina.com)", which is "a comprehensive colleciton of links to

Chinese literature sites" and one of my favorites, "www.chinapage.com", which has poetry in translation as well as in Chinese text form.

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